

Message Text

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67

ACTION ARA-20

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AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION TWO OF TWO BUENOS AIRES 6599

7. SINCE THEY HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN, PERON'S TACTIC OF APPLY-
ING THE STICK BEGAN TO PAY OFF. ON AUG 22, THE MAIN BODY OF THE
PY ESCHEWED PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS PLANNED BY THE
EXTREMIST GROUPS TO COMMEMORATE THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRELEW
MASSACRE. INSTEAD, THEY HELD THEIR OWN RALLY IN ATLANTA FOOTBALL
STADIUM--A RALLY WHICH WAS IMPRESSIVE FOR ITS TURN-OUT (WELL OVER
40,000) AND WHICH WAS RELATIVELY ORDERLY AND WELL ORGANIZED ALTHOUGH
AN AMERICAN FLAG WAS BURNED. THE ATLANTA RALLY TENDED TO SET APART
THE MAIN BODY OF THE PY--LEAVING THE EXTREMIST GROUPS TO ONE
SIDE. WHETHER OR NOT THE RALLY WAS THE KEY ELEMENT IN PERON'S
CALCULATIONS, THE FACT IS THAT SHORTLY AFTER AUG 22, PERON BEGAN
TO CHANGE HIS APPROACH AND APPLY THE CARROT INSTEAD OF THE STICK.
WHILE CONTINUING TO DENOUNCE VIOLENCE, HE RESUMED HIS EARLIER
FORMULATIONS WHICH PRAISED YOUTH AS THE FUTURE OF THE COUNTRY. HE
INDICATED HE INTENDED TO RECEIVE A NUMBER OF YOUTH LEADERS (OTHER
THAN THE YESSI CROWD), AND HE ASKED LOPEZ REGA TO TAKE A BACK SEAT
--AT LEAST FOR AWHILE. HAVING RAPPED THEIR KNUCKLES AND SHOWED
THEM WHAT IS IN STORE IF THEY DO NOT BEHAVE, PERON NOW SEEMS TO BE
INTENT ON DRAWING THEM AWAY FROM THE EXTREME LEFT AND TOWARD THE
CENTER. YOUTH HAS A PRIVILEGED PLACE IN THE MOVEMENT. PERON NOW
SAYS; AFTER THE THREE YEARS OF EMERGENCY GOVT, THE REINS WILL PASS
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TO THEM (SEE BA-6531).

8. THE PY WERE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AUG 31 RALLY AND
TALKS WERE HELD BETWEEN THE LABOR AND YOUTH SECTORS TO ORGANIZE

A JOINT DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT FOR PERON. IN A SENSE, THE DEMONSTRATION-PARADE WAS THE YOUTH SECTOR'S OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW IT HAD LEARNED ITS LESSON AND COULD PARTICIPATE IN A DISCIPLINED, ORDERLY MANNER. IT DID SO IN IMPRESSIVE FASHION.

9. BOTH LABOR AND YOUTH SECTORS HAD COMPELLING REASONS TO CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN AN EXEMPLARY MANNER. BOTH WERE VERY MUCH UNDER THE EYES OF THE LEADER AND AWARE THAT A TRANSGRESSION WOULD HAVE BROUGHT DOWN HIS WRATH. FURTHER, BOTH (AND, INDEED, THE WHOLE PERONIST MOVEMENT) WERE UNDER THE EYES OF THE PUBLIC AT LARGE. WITH ELECTIONS COMING UP IN WHICH PERON WANTS TO IMPROVE CONSIDERABLY OVER CAMPORA'S 49 PLUS PERCENT, THE PERONISTS MUST SHOW THEY CAN CONDUCT THEMSELVES WITH GREATER RESTRAINT AND RESPONSIBILITY THAN SHOWN AT EZEIZA ON JUNE 20 OR IN FRONT OF THE CASA ROSADA ON MAY 25 IF THEY WISH TO ATTRACT BLOCKS OF MIDDLE CLASS, MODERATE VOTES.

10. ON THE SUBJECT OF ATTRACTING VOTES, IT MAY BE ARGUED THAT PERON'S POST-AUG 22 CONCILIATORY LINE TOWARD YOUTH IS SIMPLY DICTATED BY THE PRAGMATIC CONSIDERATION THAT ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP AND HE AGAIN NEEDS THEIR VOTE. THERE IS SOMETHING TO THIS. PERON IS TOO MUCH THE TOTAL POLITICAL ANIMAL FOR THIS CONSIDERATION NOT TO HAVE PLAYED SOME PART IN HIS CALCULATIONS. BUT IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT IT WAS THE MAJOR CONSIDERATION. WITH OR WITHOUT A MORE CONCILIATORY LINE ON HIS PART, THE YOUTH SECTOR, AND THE LEFT WING OF HIS MOVEMENT IN GENERAL, HAD NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO PERON IN THE COMING ELECTIONS, AND PERON KNEW IT. INDEED, IT WAS ALREADY CLEAR THAT THE MAIN BODY OF THE PY WOULD STICK WITH HIM BEFORE RPT BEFORE HE SWITCHED FROM STICK TO CARROT. PERON PROBABLY LOOKS BEYOND SEPT 23. HE HAS DEFINED THE LIMITS FOR THE YOUTH SECTOR AND INDICATED THE PATH. SO LONG AS THEY BEHAVE THEMSELVES ACCORDINGLY, HE WILL WELCOME THEIR PARTICIPATION. IF HE THINKS AT ALL OF HIS FUTURE IMAGE AND PLACE IN HISTORY (AND THERE IS GOOD EVIDENCE THAT HE THINKS A GREAT DEAL ABOUT BOTH), HE WOULD CERTAINLY RATHER HAVE THE FUTURE GENERATION WITH HIM THAN AGAINST HIM--BUT WITH HIM IN THE PROPER CONTEXT, I.E. ON HIS TERMS AND NOT ON THEIRS.

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11. AS THE LEAD EDITORIAL IN EL DESCAMISADO (THE ORGAN OF THE PY MAIN BODY) PUT IT THIS WEEK, THE LEFT (READ, EXTREMIST GROUPS) CHOSE NOT TO COOPERATE ON AUG 31 AND THEREBY SIMPLY FURTHER ALIENATED THEMSELVES FROM THE PEOPLE. THIS IS A FAIRLY ACCURATE ANALYSIS. WITH THE MAIN BODY OF THE PY MOVING TOWARD THE CENTER AND GIVING UP ARMED ACTION AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT IN FAVOR OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY, THE EXTREMIST GROUPS SUCH AS THE ERP ARE LEFT IN AN INCREASINGLY ISOLATED AND EXPOSED POSITION. THEY RETAIN THE SAME PHYSICAL CAPABILITIES, BUT WITHOUT THE SUPPORT AND SYMPATHY OF THE PY, THEIR ABILITY "TO SWIM IN A FRIENDLY SEA" IS MUCH REDUCED.

12. THIS WAS DOUBTLESS ONE OF THE FACTORS WHICH INHIBITED ANY EXTREMIST ATTEMPT TO MAR AUG 31 WITH ACTS OF VIOLENCE. LEFT TO ONE

SIDE AND FACED WITH THE STRONG PROBABILITY OF SEVERE PERONIST REPRISALS IF THEY TRIED ANYTHING (ESPECIALLY IF THEY TRIED ANYTHING IN THE DEMONSTRATION AREA, WHICH WAS POLICED MOSTLY BY THE PERONISTS THEMSELVES), THE ERP AND OTHERS WERE CONTENT TO SIT ON THEIR HANDS.

13. ANOTHER INHIBITING FACTOR WAS THE MASSIVE POLICE NET OUTSIDE THE IMMEDIATE DEMONSTRATION AREA. AN EMBOFF WHO COVERED THE DOWNTOWN AREA THE AFTERNOON OF AUG 31 FOUND EVERY BLOCK COVERED BY SQUADS OF POLICE. RIOT TRUCKS, PROWL CARS AND MOTORCYCLE POLICE CRUISED THE AREA AND POLICE HELICOPTERS HOVERED OVERHEAD. MOREOVER, THE POLICE MEANT BUSINESS. SY REPORTS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT UNLIKE MAY 25, WHEN THE POLICE IN FRONT OF THE SHERATON HAD ORDERS TO PLAY A PASSIVE ROLE, ON AUG 31 THEY HAD ORDERS TO WADE IN AT THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE.

14. IN THE MINDS OF MOST ARGENTINES, THE ORDERLINESS OF THE AUG 31 RALLY (IN CONTRAST TO THE VIOLENCE AT EZEIZA) SIMPLY CONFIRMED WHAT THEY ALREADY THOUGHT--I.E. THAT PERON IS THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN OVERCOME CHAOS AND ANARCHY AND GUARANTEE ORDER IN ARGENTINA. MOST TOOK IT AS AN AWESOME DISPLAY OF THE CONTROL HE ENJOYS OVER WIDELY DISPARATE SECTORS. THE EFFECT, THEREFORE, WAS TO SOLIDIFY HIS ALREADY IMPOSING POSITION OF STRENGTH. BY OCT 12, PERON IS LIKELY TO HAVE AS NEAR COMPLETE POWER AS ANY ARGENTINE PRESIDENT HAS EVER ENJOYED. THE IMPLICATIONS OF HIS ELECTIONS FOR THE US, AND FOR ARGENTINA, WILL BE DISCUSSED IN GREATER DETAIL IN SEPTEL. IT WILL HERE BE NOTED ONLY THAT WITH HIS IMMENSE POWER (IF HE
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CHOOSES TO USE IT WISELY AND RESPONSIBLY), PERON WILL HAVE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO RISE ABOVE THE CHRONIC FRAGMENTATION AND BICKERING AND ACCOMPLISH MUCH GOOD FOR HIS COUNTRY. HIS ADMINISTRATION COULD RESULT IN THE KIND OF POLITICAL STABILITY WHICH WOULD BE IN THE INTERESTS OF THE US--ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF THE US POSITION IN THE SOUTHERN CONE. BY THE SAME TOKEN, IF HE USES IT IRRESPONSIBLY, THERE WILL BE FEW RESTRAINTS TO PREVENT HIM FROM LEADING THE COUNTRY OVER THE BRINK. MANY NON-PERONIST ARGENTINES, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITHIN THE UCR FEAR HE WILL DO JUST THAT. FURTHER, IF HE CHOSE TO ACT IRRATIONALLY, THERE WOULD BE LITTLE TO PREVENT HIM FROM LEADING ARGENTINA IN A DIRECTION SHARPLY ADVERSE TO US INTERESTS. THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS HE INTENDS TO SEEK SOME MIDDLE GROUND. NONETHELESS, WITH SO MUCH DEPENDING UPON HIS PERSONAL WHIM AND CHOICE, THERE IS A DISTURBING ELEMENT OF UNCERTAINTY. AND BEYOND THIS IS THE CONSIDERATION THAT WITH SO MUCH POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY RIDING ON ONE MAN, THERE IS, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM, LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF A SMOOTH TRANSITION SHOULD HE DIE OR BECOME INCAPACITATED. IN ESSENCE, THEN, ARGENTINES WHO STILL HOLD TO SOME EXPECTATIONS THAT THEIR COUNTRY CAN OVERCOME ITS POLITICAL MALAISE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW YEARS HAVE LITTLE ALTERNATIVE BUT TO HOPE PERON USES HIS POWER WISELY AND STAYS REASONABLY HEALTHY UNTIL THE END OF HIS TERM.
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